



Making the Most of Your Visit



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**Welcome!** You’ve driven many miles to get here, and have finally arrived at your destination: Big Bend National Park. But now what? Now that you’re here, how do you spend your time? Where should you go? What should you explore? The park is big, and often visitors have a limited amount of time to explore.

**One Day**

If time allows, drive to the **Chisos Mountains** to take in the spectacular mountain views. The Chisos Basin Visitor Center offers exhibits exploring the wildlife found in the mountains. Walk the 0.3-mile self-guiding **Window View Trail** to get a feel for the mountain scenery.

A trip along the **Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive** will give you a taste of the Chihuahuan Desert and will lead you to the Rio Grande. There are scenic overlooks and exhibits along the way. Sotol Vista, Mule Ears Overlook and Tuff Canyon are all worthwhile stops.

The short walks to the Sam Nail Ranch and Homer Wilson Ranch and a visit to the Castolon Historic District will give you a glimpse into Big Bend’s past.

A highlight of the trip is the short walk into **Santa Elena Canyon**—one of Big Bend’s most scenic spots. Drive to the end of the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive to access the trailhead. You may return to the main road by returning on the Ross Maxwell Drive or on the **Old Maverick Road**, a 13-mile gravel road linking the Ross Maxwell Drive to the Maverick Entrance. Be sure to check on road conditions first.

**Three Days**

With three days to spend in the park, you can explore the major roads more thoroughly and still have time for hiking. In the Basin area, consider hiking the **Window Trail** (5 miles round trip) or the **Lost Mine Trail** (4.8 miles round trip); consult the *Hiker’s Guide to Trails of Big Bend National Park*, for sale in park visitor centers, for trail descriptions.

In addition to the Basin and Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive (see suggestions for “one day”) you can drive to **Rio Grande Village**, perhaps stopping at Dugout Wells along the way to walk the short Chihuahuan Desert Nature Trail.

The Rio Grande Village Visitor Center offers exhibits and a small theater. Walk the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail which begins near site #18 in the campground. The bluff overlooking the Rio Grande at the end of the nature trail is a particularly beautiful spot at sunset.

The Boquillas Canyon road will take you to an overlook of Boquillas Canyon. At the end of the road is the **Boquillas Canyon Trail**, which takes you to the entrance of this spectacular canyon.

**One Week**

With a week or more to spend in Big Bend, endless possibilities are open to you. You’ll have plenty of time to explore the roads mentioned in the previous sections, and will also have time to hike or to drive some of the “**unimproved**” **dirt roads**. For these, you’ll need a high clearance or four-wheel drive vehicle; don’t forget to check at the visitor centers for current road conditions. The River Road, Glenn Springs Road, Old Ore Road, and Old Maverick Road are some of the more popular backcountry routes. A visit to **Ernst Tinaja** near the south end of the Old Ore Road is a Big Bend highlight.

If you don’t have high clearance or four-wheel drive, **gravel roads** such as Dagger Flat, and Grapevine Hills will get you “off the beaten path.” Hike the Chimneys Trail, Mule Ears Trail, or Grapevine Hills Trail for a closer look at the desert environment. If you’d like to explore the Chisos Mountains, trails to Boot Canyon, Emory Peak and the South Rim offer good views of the park and take you into another world which seems far removed from the desert. There are plenty of opportunities for overnight backpacking along these trails. A backcountry use permit is required and can be obtained at park visitor centers.



<b>Camping and Lodging Outside of the Park</b>	Lajitas Resort, Lajitas	877-525-4827	<b>Camping</b>	
	Big Bend Motor Inn, Study Butte	800-848-2363		Big Bend Motor Inn, Study Butte
	Easter Egg Valley Motel, Study Butte	432-371-2254		Big Bend Ranch State Park, Lajitas
	El Dorado Motel, Terlingua	432-371-2111		Big Bend Travel Park, Study Butte
	Gage Hotel, Marathon	432-386-4205		Longhorn Ranch, Study Butte
	Longhorn Ranch Hotel, Hwy. 118	432-371-2541		Stillwell’s Trailer Camp, FM 2627
	Marathon Motel, Marathon	432-386-4241		Study Butte RV Park
	Ten Bits Ranch, Terlingua	866-371-3110		Terlingua Ranch Resort
	Terlingua Ranch Resort	432-371-2416		

# Take a Hike on Big Bend Trails

From the 7,832 foot (2,387 meters) summit of Emory Peak, to the banks of the meandering Rio Grande, visitors will find over 200 miles of hiking trails in Big Bend National Park. Trails range from strenuous primitive routes through rugged desert backcountry to short handicapped-accessible pathways. Whatever your style of hiking, you can find it in abundance in Big Bend.

On this page are descriptions of some of the most popular easy and moderate hiking trails, divided by the geographic areas of the park. Most of these trails are perfect for shorter day hikes of up to several hours.



Trail	Trailhead Location	Round Trip (mi/km) (avg. time)		Elevation (ft/m)	Description
Eastside — Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village					
Grapevine Hills	Grapevine Hills Road mile 7 Usually passable to all vehicles.	2.2/3.5	1 hour	240/73	<b>Easy</b> Follows a sandy wash through boulder field. A short climb at the end takes you to a large balanced rock.
Hot Springs	End of Hot Springs Road. Unpaved and narrow road.	0.75/1.2	1/2 hour	0/0	<b>Easy</b> Walk past historic buildings to the riverside hot spring. Take a bathing suit and soak in 105°F water. <i>Spring is subject to flooding due to rising river levels.</i>
Rio Grande Village Nature Trail	Rio Grande Village Campground Opposite campsite 18	0.75/1.2	1/2 hour	130/40	<b>Easy</b> Cross a boardwalk to a great view of the river and distant mountains. Good birding and sunrise/sunset views.
Boquillas Canyon	End of Boquillas Canyon Road	1.4/2.3	1 hour	40/12	<b>Easy</b> Begins with a short climb, then descends via a sandy path to the river. Ends near a huge sand “slide.”
The Chisos Mountains					
Basin Loop	Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)	1.6/2.6	1 hour	350/107	<b>Moderate</b> Connects the Laguna Meadow and Pinnacles Trails. Nice views of the Basin area.
Window View	Chisos Basin Trailhead (near the Basin Store)	0.3/0.5	1/4 hour	0/0	<b>Easy</b> Level, paved, handicapped accessible. Great mountain views. The best place in the Basin to catch sunset through the Window.
Lost Mine	Basin Road mile 5	4.8/7.7	3 hours	1100/335	<b>Moderate but steep</b> This trail provides excellent mountain and desert views. Go halfway for a shorter hike.
The Window	Chisos Basin Trailhead or Basin Campground	5.6/9.0 4.4/7.0	4 hours 3 hours	980/299 500/152	<b>Moderate with steep return</b> Descends to the top of the Window pouroff. Great scenery and wildlife viewing. For a shorter hike, start at the Basin campground.
Smoking is prohibited on all trails in the Chisos Mountains.					
Westside — Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive					
Blue Creek Ranch	Ross Maxwell Drive mile 8	0.5/0.8	1/2 hour	90/27	<b>Easy</b> Descends from overlook via old road to 1930s ranch buildings; connects the Blue Creek Canyon & Dodson trails.
The Chimneys	Ross Maxwell Drive mile 13	4.8/7.7	2 hours	400/122	<b>Moderate due to length.</b> Flat and scenic desert trail to rock formations. Look for rock art. No shade.
Mule Ears Spring	Ross Maxwell Drive mile 15	3.8/6.1	3 hours	20/6	<b>Moderate</b> A beautiful desert hike to a small spring. Spectacular geology and mountain/desert views.
Santa Elena Canyon	8 miles west of Castolon	1.6/2.6	3/4 hour	80/24	<b>Easy</b> Crosses creekbed, climbs stairs, then follows the river upstream into the mouth of the canyon. <i>Flash flooding on Terlingua Creek can close this trail.</i>
<div><div> = Self-guiding trail</div><div> = Handicapped accessible trail</div></div>					

## Float the Rio Grande

If you have the time and a spirit of adventure, you may want to consider a river trip. Seeing the park’s canyons from the middle of the Rio Grande is both fascinating and gratifying. There are many possibilities, from half-day floats to extended seven-day excursions. Stop by any park visitor center for more details on planning a float trip. Park Rangers can recommend a trip that meets your abilities and interests.

## Rio Grande Float Trip Outfitters

Big Bend River Tours	800-545-4240
Desert Sports	888-989-6900
Far Flung Outdoor Center	800-839-7238